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ABSTRACT

This booklet is part of a series of reports on "hot topics" in education. It presents information intended to cut through the hype and hysteria that often surrounds the subject of school violence. The booklet offers an overview of current research on school violence prevention, outlines some practical ideas for use in the classroom, and takes a look at what some schools in the northwestern United States are doing to address this serious issue. Although schools are actually among the safest places young people congregate, more than half of U.S. schools experienced some crime during the 1996-97 school year, and 1 in 10 reported a serious violent crime. Two themes emerge from the literature that should be of special interest to educators. One is that violence is a learned behavior and can be unlearned. The other is that early intervention that teaches positive life skills may be the best hope of preventing violent behavior. Some warning signs of school violence and some ways to implement violence prevention programs are outlined. Descriptions of eight school or district programs in the northwestern United States, some of which are in urban areas, are provided. Two appendixes discuss purchasing a violence prevention program and things students can do to stop school violence. (Contains 31 references.) (SLD)

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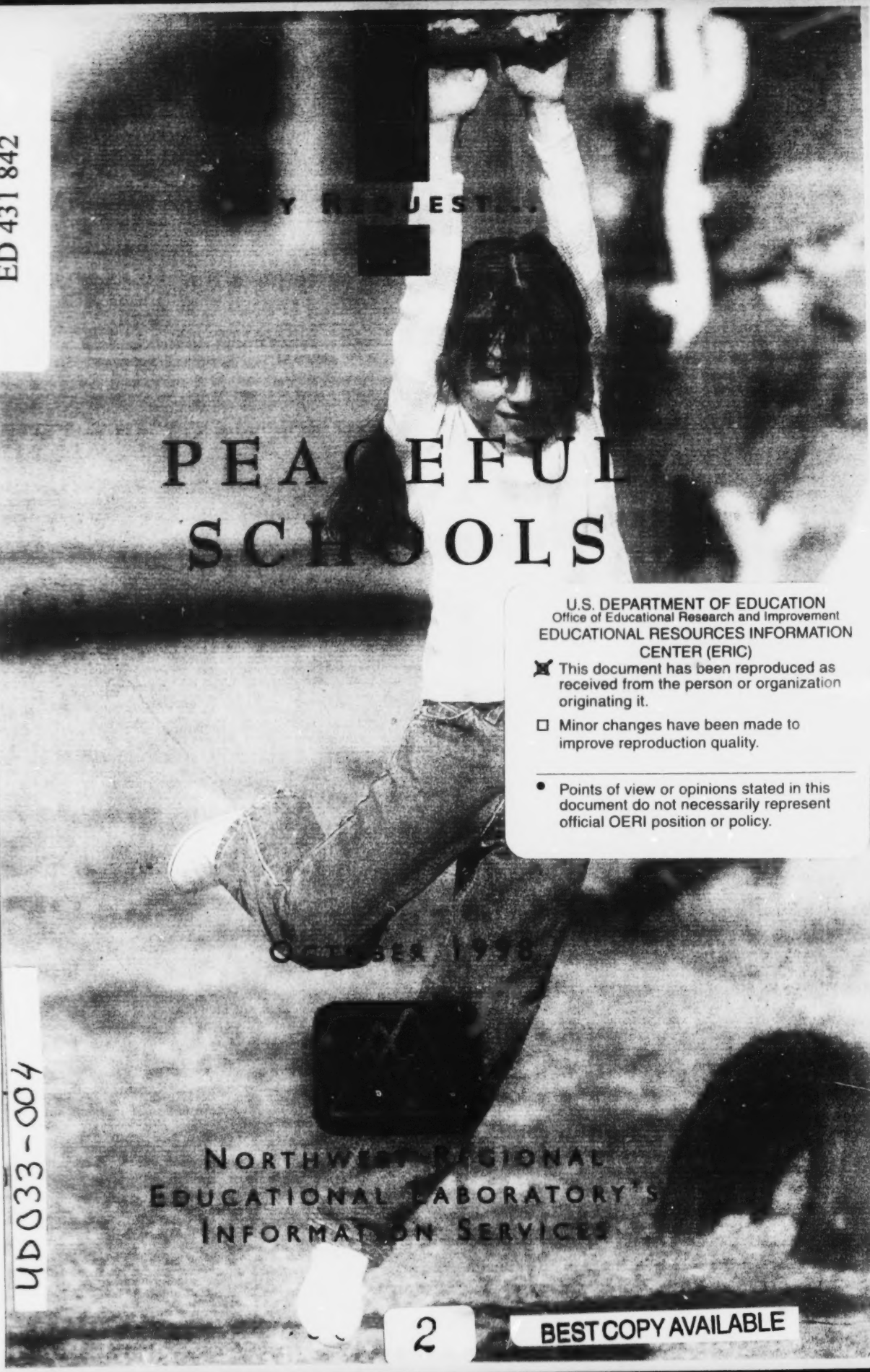

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OCTOBER 1998

NORTHWEST REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL LABORATORY

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FOREWORD

This booklet is the ninth in a series of "hot topic" reports produced by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. These reports briefly address current educational concerns and issues as indicated by requests for information that come to the Laboratory from the Northwest region and beyond. Each booklet contains a discussion of research and literature pertinent to the issue, a sampling of how Northwest schools are addressing the issue, suggestions for adapting these ideas to schools, selected references, and contact information.

One objective of the series is to foster a sense of community and connection among educators. Another is to increase awareness of current education-related themes and concerns. Each booklet gives practitioners a glimpse of how fellow educators are addressing issues, overcoming obstacles, and attaining success in certain areas. The goal of the series is to give educators current, reliable, and useful information on topics that are important to them.

Other titles in the series include:

- Service Learning in the Northwest Region
- Tutoring Strategies for Successful Learning
- Scheduling Alternatives: Options for Student Success
- Grade Configuration: Who Goes Where?
- Alternative Schools: Approaches for Students at Risk
- All Students Learning: Making It Happen in Your School
- High-Quality Professional Development: An Essential Component of Successful Schools
- Student Mentoring

INTRODUCTION

Padukah, Kentucky... Jonesboro, Arkansas... Springfield, Oregon... As the horror of school violence has hit each of these quiet communities, concern has echoed far and wide. Violence no longer feels like something that happens "somewhere else." While media reports have tallied the loss of lives and bemoaned the loss of innocence, educators have been asking hard questions:

- "How could this happen?"
- "How safe are our schools?"
- "What can we do to prevent school violence?"

There are no simple or easy answers. Violence is a complex problem that extends well beyond the schoolhouse walls. It includes a wide range of behaviors, most of them far less sensational than the rare incidents that earn headlines. Violence of all types has become so commonplace in America that it no longer surprises us. Indeed, we have grown to expect it (Centers for Disease Control, 1993). Some authors on the subject warn that acts of violence in public schools have reached the level of "forseeability," and that schools must plan for this harsh reality (Bachus, 1994).

Educators have good reasons to concern themselves with violence. The fear of violence gets in the way of the business of learning. Violence at school or even the perception of danger can erode community support for public education (Noguera, 1996). Efforts to react to school violence may take resources away from other worthy school programs. Schools operating with a climate of fear may find it difficult to attract and retain good teachers (Rossman & Morley, 1996).

On a more encouraging note, there are many positive reasons for educators to become involved in violence prevention. Safer schools tend to be more effective schools, experiencing higher academic achievement and fewer disciplinary problems (Drug Strategies, 1998; Heaviside et al., 1998). Well-designed violence-prevention programs can enhance students' problem-solving skills, increase their self-esteem, and help them bond with the institution of school (Kenney & Watson, 1996).

This booklet presents information intended to cut through the hype and hysteria that often surrounds the subject of school violence. It offers an overview of current research on school violence prevention, outlines some practical ideas for use in the classroom, and takes a look at what schools around the Northwest are doing to address this serious issue.

In Context: How Real is the Danger?

What do we mean by violence? Although government statistics on violence typically track person-to-person crimes such as assault, rape, and robbery, many researchers define school violence more broadly to include intimidation and coercion, as well as physical harm (Drug Strategies, 1998). School violence thus encompasses everything from playground bullying and taunting to sexual harassment to the use of weapons. Throughout society, violence of varying degrees is used to resolve conflicts, to express anger, or to gain status (Comprehensive Health Education Foundation, 1994).

Keeping this broader definition in mind may be helpful in talking with students about violence and planning for violence prevention. "Non-physical types of violence cannot be overlooked or we perpetuate an attitude that says it is okay to mistreat and violate others as long as there are no bruises, blood or physical injury," note the authors of a statewide violence prevention plan adopted in Minnesota (Anderson et al., 1995).

Schools are actually among the safest places young people congregate (Drug Strategies, 1998). Most students feel safe at school most of the time (Furlong & Morrison, 1994). Only two percent of the nation's public schools have seen fit to adopt stringent security measures, such as posting a full-time guard or using metal detectors (Heaviside et al., 1998). And actually, the number of children killed by gun violence in schools is about half the number of Americans killed annually by lightning strikes (Donohue, Schiraldi, & Ziedenberg, 1998). Nonetheless, schools are far from being the safe havens that parents, students, teachers, and policymakers desire.

In 1994 the need for violence prevention work was officially recognized as a national issue in the Goals 2000: Educate America Act. Goal number seven states, "By the year 2000, every school in the United States will be free of drugs, violence, and the unauthorized presence of firearms and alcohol and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning." Though some progress has been observed in meeting this goal, it is difficult to gauge exactly what has been accomplished. Consider these snapshots:

- Three million crimes per year are committed in and around schools, compared to one million in American workplaces (Sautter, 1995).
- In a 1995 survey, 10 percent of high school students reported carrying a weapon on school property in the past month, and 8 percent of high school students had been threatened or injured with a weapon on school property (Sickmund, et al., 1997).
- More than half of the nation's schools experienced some crime during the 1996-97 school year, and one in 10 reported a serious violent crime such as rape, robbery, or fights involving a weapon. In 1996, there were 10,000 reported physical attacks or fights with weapons in schools, 7,000 reported robberies, and 4,000 reported rapes and sexual assaults (Heaviside, et al., 1998).
- From 1989 to 1995, the percentage of students victimized by violent crime increased from 3.4 percent to 4.2 percent (Chandler, et al., 1998).
- Violence (not confined to school violence alone) is the second leading cause of death for America's students (Prothrow-Stith, 1994).

Concern about school violence is widespread, although perceptions of the problem vary among different populations. In a 1996 study, 72 percent of the general public considered the presence of drugs and violence in schools to be the most serious problem affecting education. Among teachers, however, only 47 percent viewed drugs and violence as their top concern. Teachers cited school funding, class size, and low academic standards as more significant issues than school violence (Farkas, Johnson, Friedman, & Bers, 1996; Rossman & Morley, 1996).

Perceptions of violence are significant because feeling unsafe is not conducive to learning or to teaching. Out of fear, some students avoid specific places at school, such as restrooms or certain hallways. (Bastion & Taylor, 1991). A small percentage of high school students (4.4 percent) have missed at least a day of class because they felt unsafe (Centers for Disease Control, 1995). Worrying about becoming a victim causes some students to carry a weapon or to become victimizers themselves (Kimweli & Anderman, 1997).

In schools with a high incidence of violence, teachers may hesitate to confront misbehaving students out of concern for their own safety (Kenney & Watson, 1996). Students who know their teachers fear them are less likely to show respect and more likely to be insolent and insubordinate, making good teaching almost impossible (Noguera, 1996).

Clearly, there is much work to be done.

UNDERSTANDING VIOLENCE

From the mountain of literature on the causes and consequences of violence among young people, two themes emerge that should be of special interest to educators:

1. Violence is learned behavior, and can be unlearned
2. Early intervention that teaches positive life skills may be the best hope of preventing violent behavior

How do children learn violence? They hear it in name-calling and threats. They experience it when family members use physical force as discipline or to vent anger. They see it on television and movie screens when guns are used to settle differences. No one who lives in our society—the most violent country in the industrialized world (Prothrow-Stith, 1994; Walker, 1995)—should be surprised that children learn violence early in life from what they see being modeled all around them (Kimweli & Anderman, 1997). Schools, after all, are reflections of their communities (Center to Prevent Handgun Violence, 1990).

School conditions can contribute to a climate in which violence becomes more likely as well. Schools that are conducive to disorder, violence, and crime also tend to have overcrowding, high student-to-teacher ratios, insufficient curricular/course relevance, low student academic achievement, student apathy, poor facility design that increases isolation and hampers communication, and adult leaders who fail to act (Rossman & Morley, 1996; Sautter, 1995; University of the State of New York, 1994; Watson, 1995).

Safe schools, in contrast, tend to be small and attempt to treat students as individuals. They seek to bridge the gap between school and community by involving parents and local residents in mutually supportive relationships. They create a physical environment that is aesthetically pleasing. They focus less energy on enforcing rules and more on developing trusting relationships between adults and students (Noguera, 1996).

VIOLENT VERSUS NONVIOLENT KIDS

What keeps some children from becoming violent, even if they have been exposed to risk factors? Researchers have identified strong protective factors that help resilient children avoid behaving violently. Protective factors are assets that promote a child's positive development. They can be internal, such as a belief in oneself, or external, such as support from family or community (Anderson, 1995). Many protective factors can be fostered in the school setting. These include:

- Positive role models; exposure to a greater number of positive rather than negative behaviors
- Development of self-esteem and self-efficacy
- Supportive relationships, including those with teachers and friends
- A sense of hope about the future
- Belief in oneself
- Strong social skills
- Good peer relationships
- A close, trusting bond with a nurturing adult outside the family
- Empathy and support from the mother or mother figure
- The ability to find refuge and a sense of self-esteem in hobbies and creative pursuits, useful work, and assigned chores
- The sense that one is in control of one's life and can cope with whatever happens

(American Psychological Association, 1996)

A strong bond to the institution of school is another powerful protective factor for young people. However, for this bond to form, schools need to provide reasons and opportunities for students to bond, and also teach skills that students can use to make positive contributions to the institution (Comprehensive Health Education Foundation, 1994).

Opposite from protective factors are those experiences that cause children to have greater tendencies toward violence. No one cause, social ill, or life experience inevitably leads to violence. However, specific factors put children more at risk of resorting to aggression or violence when they feel afraid, threatened, or angry (American Psychological Association, 1996; Comprehensive Health Education Foundation, 1994; Prothrow-Stith, 1994; Walker, 1995). These risk factors originate outside the school walls, but can exert a powerful influence on the learning environment. They include:

- Poverty, which affects one in every five children
- Domestic violence, which may take the form of neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse, or emotional maltreatment of children (children are also profoundly affected by witnessing violence in the home, which can draw them into a cycle of violence)
- Exposure to violence in society and the media, which researchers have found causes some children to become desensitized to violence and others to become more fearful of violence
- Easy access to guns and other weapons
- Ethnic or racial conflict, which creates tension that can quickly escalate into violence
- Gangs, which are both a cause and a consequence of violence and which adopt violence as a way of life

- Substance abuse, which shares many of the same risk factors as violence. Reducing access to drugs may reduce violence

Public health experts concerned about youth safety recommend fighting violence the same way they combat disease: ***reducing the risk factors*** known to increase the likelihood of violence, while at the same time ***increasing the protective factors*** that work against violence.

Research also underscores the need for early intervention with children most at risk of adopting violent behaviors (Walker, 1995). Efforts to stem violence have shown early intervention to be safer, preferable, and more cost-effective than waiting until violent behaviors become a habit (Prothrow-Stith, 1994). Children who exhibit chronic patterns of aggressive behavior in the early elementary grades are at risk not only of continued aggression, but also for delinquency and substance abuse (Larson, 1994; Lochman, White, & Wayland, 1991).

Warning Signs

How can educators know when to intervene? According to the American Psychological Association and the American Academy of Pediatrics, the following warning signs merit attention from a mental health expert:

Warning signs in the toddler and preschool child:

- Has many temper tantrums in a single day or several lasting more than 15 minutes, and often cannot be calmed by parents, family members, or other caregivers
- Has many aggressive outbursts, often for no reason
- Is extremely active, impulsive, and fearless
- Consistently refuses to follow directions and listen to adults
- Does not seem attached to parents
- Frequently watches violence on television, engages in play that has violent themes, or is cruel toward other children

Warning signs in the school-aged child:

- Has trouble paying attention and concentrating
- Often disrupts classroom activities
- Does poorly in school
- Frequently gets into fights with other children in school
- Reacts to disappointments, criticism, or teasing with extreme and intense anger, blame, or revenge
- Watches many violent television shows and movies or plays a lot of violent video games
- Has few friends, and is often rejected by other children because of his or her behavior

- Makes friends with other children known to be unruly or aggressive
- Consistently does not listen to adults
- Is not sensitive to the feelings of others
- Is cruel or violent toward pets or other animals

WARNING SIGNS IN THE PRETEEN OR ADOLESCENT:

- Consistently does not listen to authority figures
- Pays no attention to the feelings or rights of others
- Mistreats people and seems to rely on physical violence or threats of violence to solve problems
- Often expresses the feeling that life has treated him or her unfairly
- Does poorly in school and often skips classes
- Misses school frequently for no identifiable reason
- Gets suspended from or drops out of school
- Joins a gang, gets involved in fighting, stealing, or destroying property
- Drinks alcohol and/or uses inhalants or drugs

This material was excerpted from a brochure produced through a collaborative project of the American Psychological Association and the American Academy of Pediatrics. Full text copies of the brochure are available by contacting the American Academy, Division of Publications, 141 Northwest Point Blvd, PO Box 927, Elk Grove Village, IL 60009-0927.

Walking the Talk: Implementing Violence Prevention Efforts

Because schools are in the learning business, they are ideally positioned to teach young people alternatives to violence (Walker, 1995). Of course, schools alone cannot hope to end the cycle of violence in our society. But school-based efforts can provide the cornerstone of comprehensive efforts to reduce violence in the community. Schools offer the most logical and accessible point to reach the students most at risk of violent behavior (Prothrow-Stith, 1994). Educational programs—whether they involve individual classrooms, entire schools, or community partnerships—provide a variety of opportunities for students to adopt norms and learn skills that can lead to nonviolent problem solving (Drug Strategies, 1998). Following is an examination of the different ways the education system can target and impact violence prevention work.

Schoolwide Efforts. Schoolwide violence prevention efforts can take many forms. They may work to protect students from danger or victimization, and can also seek to prevent students from developing or relying on aggressive behavior as a way to solve conflicts (Walker, 1995). One of the first steps for schools to take in developing strategies for preventing violence is to identify existing problems and assess the needs of their school and its surrounding neighborhood. The team of individuals who do this may involve the principal, teachers, parents, students, school board members, community volunteers, local law enforcement agencies, and others who care about making schools safe. Additional issues that should be addressed in schoolwide efforts include:

- ***Physical plant:*** The school building should feel safe to those who occupy it. Entrances should be visible, hallways well lighted, and playgrounds monitored. If hallways or the cafeteria have the tendency to become congested, class periods can be staggered to reduce crowding. The aesthetics of a school are also important to safety. Is the school an attractive, welcoming place where students want to spend their time? In addition, the school should work to make a connection to the surrounding neighborhood. Conducting a site assessment (with student involvement) can help determine other specific issues of concern (Center for Study and Prevention of Violence, 1998).
- ***Organization:*** Safe schools tend to have a strong sense of community. Small schools often have such an atmosphere because their size allows teachers and students to get to know one another well. In larger schools, organizing by inter-disciplinary teams can create smaller communities in which students have a chance to bond with adults and with the institution of school.
- ***Discipline:*** Safe schools deal with disruptive behavior early, fairly, and effectively. To feel respected, students need to perceive discipline as being fair, consistent, and clear. Disciplinary policies (such as zero tolerance for weapons, drugs, or alcohol) need to be age appropriate, clear, and repeatedly communicated to students and parents. Youth who are chronically violent or antisocial, and whose presence may put others in danger, need to be provided with alternatives that offer age-specific interventions and teach positive skills (Drug Strategies, 1998; Ingersoll, 1997).

- ***Norms:*** Schools are well positioned to challenge social norms that reinforce violence and replace them with norms that prevent violence. For example, students identified as natural leaders can be recruited for conflict resolution or peer mediation programs. These popular programs change norms by teaching that creative problem-solving—not fighting—is "cool." Diversity education teaches respect for others as a school norm. Having all staff model such skills as active listening, anger management, and creative problem solving reinforces these positive norms.
- ***Crisis response:*** Advance planning allows a school to respond quickly in the event of a crisis. The crisis response team in the school should run through possible scenarios and establish a plan that clearly indicates how the school will react to a situation and who will do what. This plan should then be disseminated to all building staff, including support, custodial, and food service staff.
- ***Teacher training:*** Inservice training helps teachers understand the theory behind a violence prevention curriculum. Training from mental health experts can help teachers identify at-risk students who may need expert attention or intervention.
- ***Instructional delivery:*** Schools must decide how they want the violence prevention message to be delivered to students. Prepackaged curriculums, training videos, speakers, and trainers are among the many options available. (See Appendix 1 for guidelines in selecting a curriculum.)

Classroom Efforts. In conjunction with schoolwide efforts, or as the lesson plans of one teacher, classroom violence prevention learning can greatly enhance the safety of a school. Keep in mind that violence prevention is not a one-time lesson. Rather, it's an

ongoing process in which positive behaviors are modeled and reinforced. Ideas for effectively communicating a violence prevention message in individual classrooms include:

- ***Teach and practice social skills:*** An effective violence prevention curriculum teaches skills that enable students to manage their anger, solve problems, negotiate with their peers, listen actively, communicate effectively, and resolve conflict (Drug Strategies, 1998). Interactive teaching methods (such as group work, cooperative learning, and class discussions) give students opportunities to practice positive social skills.
- ***Connect violence-prevention skills to academics:*** The pursuit of academic excellence may also help prevent violence (Larson, 1994). Academic subjects such as English, math, and social studies develop students' cognitive skills. The same skills—reasoning, weighing consequences, using language to solve problems, making considered choices—will also help them reason their way through the stressful and conflict-laden situations that life presents (Prothrow-Stith, 1994). Teachers can help students see the connection between the classroom and the rest of their life. A health class, for example, can teach that anger is a normal emotion we all experience and can constructively channel. A history class can reinforce this message by highlighting individuals who have channeled their anger or frustration into creative solutions. A civics class can reinforce it again by giving students an opportunity to put their problem-solving skills to work on an issue that affects the school or community (Kenney & Watson, 1996).

- ***Manage class efficiently:*** A well-managed classroom provides a stable environment conducive to learning and a place where students can practice positive skills. Ideas to help educators manage their classrooms effectively include: using body language to "cue" students about their behavior (reinforcing positive behavior, and discouraging negative behavior); moving around the classroom to increase physical proximity to all students; detecting problems before violence erupts; and applying fair, consistent discipline (Rossman & Morley, 1996). Students tend to show more respect for teachers whose classroom style is marked by firmness, compassion, and an interesting, engaging, and challenging style of teaching, and who do not let differences of race, class, or age create barriers between them and their students (Noguera, 1996).
- ***Develop media awareness:*** Students need to become more aware consumers of the mass media. Class discussions can deglamorize the violent heroes and themes celebrated in movies and on television by discussing the real consequences of violent behavior (Prothrow-Stith, 1994).
- ***Teach conflict resolution skills:*** Peer mediation and conflict resolution programs teach students skills to settle their differences creatively, without violence. These proactive programs teach that conflict is pervasive and inevitable. Handled constructively, conflict can lead to healthy development and growth. Handled destructively, it can lead to troubled or abusive relationships or failed goals (Horowitz & Boardman, 1994). As early as the elementary grades, volunteer peer mediators can be trained to help their fellow students settle differences by negotiating a series of confidential steps:

1. Each party gets a chance to explain his or her view of the situation
2. Each party puts his or her feelings into the open, which creates empathy
3. Both parties are empowered to solve the problem non-violently

(Shepherd, 1994)

- ***Remind students that they can make a difference.*** Help students see that violence is not inevitable. Use poster contests, art shows, theater presentations, and other forums to involve students in spreading the word about violence prevention. (For a detailed list of steps students can take to prevent violence, see Appendix 2.)

Community Involvement. Beyond teacher and administrator efforts to curb school violence, enlisting the community to combat violence can help reduce risks and promote protective bonds between young people, and their families, schools, and communities (Drug Strategies, 1998; Comprehensive Health Education Foundation, 1994). Such involvement enables the school to draw on the diversity of the local community (Center for Study of Prevention of Violence, 1998). Opportunities for community involvement can include:

- **Mentoring:** Mentoring can connect youth with positive adult role models and help to combat the risks and diminished opportunities created by poverty or family dysfunction.
- **Parent involvement:** Roles that parents can play in schools are endless. Parent volunteers can serve as safety monitors, provide safe houses, or patrol corridors between school and home to enhance student security.

- **Parenting skills education:** Schools can teach positive parenting skills that may prevent abuse and help break the cycle of family violence. Parent management training, which teaches parents skills for interacting positively with their children, is an important component in treating aggressive children (Larson, 1994). Classes for teen parents provide early intervention for young families.
- **Youth services:** Community leaders should be involved in planning for violence prevention to coordinate delivery of services from a variety of agencies and organizations. Make the school available for after-hour use by community groups. Youth clubs or after-school recreation programs, for instance, can become school allies to prevent violence. After-school recreation programs make the school a safe haven within the community.
- **Building liaisons:** Community policing and other liaisons with law enforcement (such as recruiting police officers to coach youth basketball leagues) bring students into contact with police in positive ways (Kenney & Watson, 1996).
- **Creating service opportunities:** Schools can provide students with opportunities to make positive contributions to the life of the community through service learning, thus creating in students a sense of pride and connection to the community.

- **Weapons education:** Community-based weapons education programs attempt to deglamorize weapons, make young people think about the consequences of their actions, and also connect at-risk youth with adults in positive, nonpunitive ways. They offer an opportunity to intervene early with youth who have been caught in possession of a weapon (Trone, 1997). Messages are often delivered by presenters who have "been there," who share the students' socioeconomic background, and who may have learned the hard way that weapons don't solve problems. Typical messages include:
    - Gun violence hurts the victims, their families, and entire communities
    - Being involved in gun violence will change your whole life
    - There are adults who care and can help you find nonviolent ways to solve problems

  (Trone, 1997)

Challenges to Violence Prevention

It is never easy to implement a new educational program. Even the best of intentions can result in frustration if planners are not aware of potential pitfalls. The following list details some possible challenges to effective implementation of violence prevention programs.

- **System coordination**: Work to coordinate the various agencies based on a shared goal, while at the same time navigating community politics. Different agencies may have overlapping agendas when it comes to school safety and violence prevention. Avoid turf battles by working toward cooperative solutions.
- **Parent participation**: Acknowledge that it may take effort to enlist the support of parents for volunteer programs that are perceived as time-intensive, due to the time constraints many families live under. Outreach may be needed to overcome parental resistance to attending parenting skills classes. Enlist the media to help spread the word in creative ways that engage target populations.
- **School climate**: Remain proactive, not reactive. "Get tough" security measures, such as placing metal detectors at the school doors and having armed guards patrol the hallways, may have some popular appeal. However, these measures have not proven generally effective in reducing school violence (Noguera, 1996). Reactive measures don't address the underlying causes of violence and don't promote positive norms. Nor do such efforts involve students as part of the solution. Instead, they project a negative message that students are not to be trusted (Drug Strategies, 1998). Schools that do resort to security measures need to communicate that these policies don't reflect mistrust of students; rather, they are being used to protect students from danger.

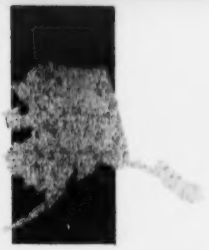
- **Implementation method**: Avoid using scare tactics with students. Graphic films about violence may backfire and actually glamorize guns or fighting.
- **Program scope**: Remember that effective efforts are long-term and comprehensive. Short-term or one-shot violence prevention efforts are seldom successful.
- **Expectations**: Accept that there is no easy cure for violence. Expecting a conflict resolution or peer mediation program to provide a total solution to school violence, for example, is unrealistic and sets up the program for failure (Horowitz & Boardman, 1995). Similarly, programs that focus exclusively on one theme, such as self-esteem, tend to be ineffective as violence prevention (Drug Strategies, 1998). Gang members may have high self-esteem but lack the skills needed to avoid resolving conflicts violently.

Conclusion

On their own, schools can't hope to solve the complex problems associated with violence in America. However, there are many compelling reasons for educators to take the lead in violence prevention. Research shows that early prevention offers the best hope for breaking the cycle of violence. Schools provide a logical, accessible place where young people can learn the skills to solve problems without resorting to violence. The life skills that prevent violence also go hand-in-hand with academic achievement. Teaching and modeling these skills can make schools safer and more effective, benefiting students, teachers, families, and the larger community.

THE NORTHWEST SAMPLER

On the following pages are descriptions of several violence prevention programs. Though the programs are all different in design, each seeks to create a safe learning environment conducive to learning for all students. These Northwest programs are by no means meant to represent an exclusive listing of exemplary programs; rather they are just a few of the many good ones found in the region and throughout the country. Some have been in existence for several years, while others are fledgling efforts. Some have chosen to describe every component of their program, while others wanted to focus on one element alone. Included for each site is location and contact information, observed outcomes as a result of the program, a description of the program, and tips directly from these educators to others looking to implement similar changes in their schools.



Location

Anchorage School District
4600 Debarr
PO Box 196614
Anchorage, AK 99519-6614

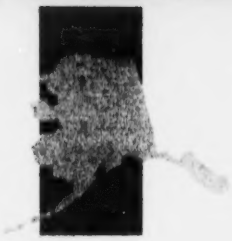
Contact

Michael Kerosky, Coordinator for Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program
Phone: 907/269-2471
Fax: 907/269-2472

Description

"Kids want a peaceful school," says Anchorage School District's (ASD) Coordinator for Safe and Drug-Free Schools, Michael Kerosky. Based on this premise, and the knowledge that peaceful schools don't happen on their own, 11 years ago the district became the second site in the United States to implement a peaceful school program known as the Resolving Conflict Creatively Program (RCCP). It began in eight Anchorage elementary schools, but today 35 of the district's 61 elementary schools, as well as all of the middle schools are actively using RCCP. One high school is piloting the program this year. The program has also spread to 12 other cities nationwide. By many accounts, Anchorage's use of RCCP is a success story, but to understand why, it is important to look at the program's multifaceted design and the dedicated professionals who implement it.

RCCP is a districtwide approach to peaceful schools. Program implementation begins with a nine-to-12-month planning phase that includes key district stakeholders. The resulting plan that is developed directs district implementation of the program

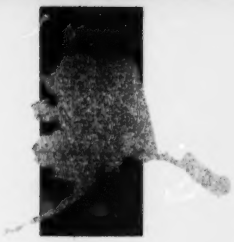


and addresses funding and staffing issues. Needs assessments, faculty surveys, and written principal agreements are also used to guide decisions in this phase.

A core principle of RCCP is that a peaceful classroom starts with a peaceful teacher. To achieve this, the second phase of the program centers on teacher, staff, and administrative training. They take part in an intensive 30-hour training that introduces them to the curriculum and helps them to develop an awareness of their own biases, prejudices, and cultural insensitivities. Each teacher can then work with a trained RCCP teacher mentor who provides follow-up classroom assistance.

Once teachers have received sufficient RCCP training, they implement the curriculum in their classrooms. Students generally receive one RCCP lesson per week. Lesson themes include cooperation, empathy, communication, diversity appreciation, responsible decisionmaking, and conflict resolution. The core curriculum focuses on defining conflict, win-win negotiation, active listening, using "I" messages, mediation, and valuing diversity.

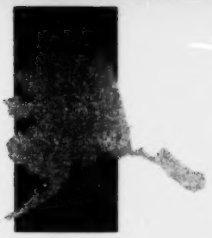
After the RCCP curriculum has been implemented for at least a year (preferably two), schools can implement a peer mediation program. Students selected as peer mediators receive 24 hours of specialized training. Working in pairs, mediators are on duty at every recess, and can be identified by the peer mediator T-shirts they wear. The mediators are very respected by the other children, who frequently involve them to solve simple disputes. Mediators know, however, that there are certain disputes that must involve adults, and they do not hesitate to do so. Every couple of weeks each school's peer mediator group meets to discuss issues and receive additional training. Once a year all of the district's more than 800 peer mediators gather for a rally.



In addition to the school and classroom components of the program, parents are also involved in RCCP. Starting this year the district will implement the RCCP parent component, called *Peace in the Family*, which trains parents to work with their peers in teaching RCCP concepts and skills for use at home.

Nationally high schools have been the most difficult places to infuse violence prevention curriculum. This year the RCCP National Center selected one Anchorage high schools to pilot a high school implementation process. Each Anchorage high school has already established a Violence Prevention Task Force (during the 1997-98 school year) that will dovetail nicely with RCCP efforts. The task forces are comprised of a representative sample of the high school community, including students, parents, and business partners. During the past school year, each task force conducted a needs assessment for their school, and developed a violence prevention plan. Through a Greatest Need Safe and Drug-Free Schools grant, each task force was allotted $5,000 to begin implementation of their plan. More funds will be available this year for continued implementation. Task forces are led by two building coordinators, who receive a $1,000 stipend for their responsibilities. While the task forces are not officially connected with the RCCP effort, many of them are considering RCCP as part of their implementation plan.

Over the last few years (1996-1999), the ASD has devoted over $500,000 of the Greatest Need Safe and Drug-Free Schools funds to the implementation of RCCP and the development of the high school Violence Prevention Task Forces. As part of the 1998-99 funding, ASD will be working with the research team that conducted the national RCCP research. Initial data will be gathered and a master plan developed for a full-fledged violence prevention effort evaluation for next year.

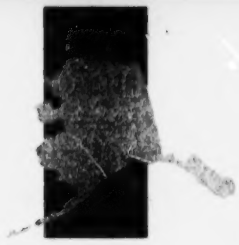


Further information about RCCP can be obtained from the RCCP National Center at 212/509-0022. The center provides on-site training, professional development, technical assistance, and a site-specific national RCCP trainer. Two annual conferences are held to help RCCP sites stay current on methodology and research.

RCCP National Center
40 Exchange Place
Suite 114
New York, NY 10005

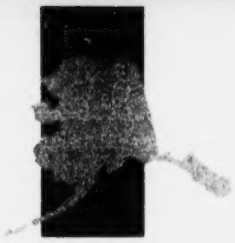
Observed Outcomes

- Many building principals who once dismissed the program as another passing fad have since requested to have RCCP in their schools because they see what a difference the program makes in participating schools
- The school climate at participating RCCP schools feels noticeably more upbeat and positive
- RCCP school teachers report having more time to teach academic material; RCCP school principals report less student trips to the office
- People who participate in the training report that the acquired skills go beyond the classroom and actually help in their personal relationships as well
- Teachers report that they are more confident when talking with angry parents or telling them difficult things about their children



KEYS TO SUCCESS

- Make sure to implement class lessons well before peer mediators are used because mediation will help only if the student body has been previously taught to understand and use it
- Commit to consistently teaching violence prevention lessons; RCCP research shows that a minimum of 25 lessons per year must be taught for student violence to be curbed
- Enlist the support of the building principals because they are key to successful implementation
- Do not pick and choose parts of a program to implement
- Use comprehensive staff training with all adults who have contact with students



Location

Fairbanks North Star Borough School District
520 Fifth Avenue
Fairbanks, AK 99701

Contact

Jim Holt, Assistant Superintendent
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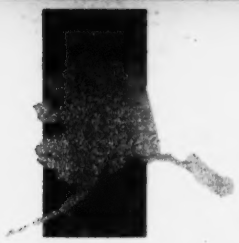
Fax: 907/451-6160
Email: jeholt@northstar.k12.ak.us

Description

From elementary to secondary schools, safety is a top priority at Fairbanks North Star Borough School District. Work toward creating peaceful schools is ongoing at all levels of the school system, but district-level administration wanted to renew emphasis on safety this year. To set a tone that communicated this to staff and students, the 1998-99 school year began with an inservice provided to all 1,300 school district employees by Dr. Ron Stephens, Executive Director of the National School Safety Center (NSSC). The inservice was designed to build awareness among staff and community about the district's commitment to violence prevention work. A technical assistance contract with the NSSC will allow the district to take a closer look at its ability to keep students safe. Specifically, Stephens will revisit the district in January, at which time he will meet with building principals on the issues of crisis plans, physical plant safety, and school climate. He will meet with the school board to review board policies on safety. He will also hold meetings with the district's interagency crisis response team to provide advice and direction, with parents to examine the issue of violence nationally and answer related questions, and with the local Chamber



of Commerce to discuss the issue and what they can do to assist school efforts.

In addition to working with the NSSC, the district is emphasizing positive school climate as the key to school safety. As Assistant Superintendent Jim Holt puts it, "If kids like their schools and like being in them, the chance of violence drops significantly." Keeping with this philosophy, each school building in the district has made a concerted effort to improve school climate by surveying the staff, parents, and students to find out what they like about their school and what they are concerned about. Improvement goals will be based on the results of these surveys.

The district has also stepped up it efforts to make sure that school hallways (often the location of fights and disruption) are peaceful places. Though district-employed hall monitors have been used for several years in Fairbanks, this year the monitors were renamed "Safety Monitors." Present in building hallways during passing times and throughout the day, they are easily identified by the vests and name tags they wear. The Safety Monitors, as well as administrators, are receiving training in a certified program called Mandt Training. It focuses on teaching the skills for de-escalating potentially harmful situations and passive physical restraint.

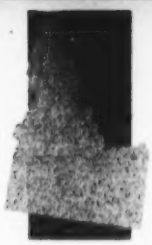
A new addition to the district's violence prevention strategies is the school district Safety Officer, whose primary responsibilities will include truancy prevention and anti-drug and gang efforts. To accomplish this the Safety Officer will coordinate with local businesses and conduct home visits as necessary.

Observed Outcomes

- Parents and staff feel that safety is being proactively addressed
- The community and the school district are jointly involved in the resolution of youth violence
- Schools feel as prepared as they can be should a tragedy occur

Keys to Success

- Don't scare everyone—the intent of a violence prevention program is to be proactive, not to terrify the staff or the public
- Don't overreact by making the schools feel like jails
- Be careful not to plant ideas in students' heads that otherwise would never be there
- Emphasize that youth violence is a community problem, not just a school problem; our youth are in the community more than they are in school
- Implement a communication plan that seeks to raise the awareness of parents and the community of the efforts being made by the school system to prevent violence



Location

Pocatello School District # 25
3115 Pole Line Road
PO Box 1390
Pocatello, ID 83201

Contact

John Raukar, Pupil Personnel Director
Chris Williams, Public Information Officer
Phone: 208/235-3563
Fax: 208/235-3280

Description

Similar to some recent headline-snapping events that have captured the nation's attention, last year a student at a Pocatello alternative school walked into the school with a gun and held several staff and students hostage for a number of hours. Though the incident did not result in any bloodshed, it deeply disturbed the district's sense of security and peace. Like many school systems that experience such acts of aggression, the situation sent district officials searching for an appropriate way to restore peace to their schools.

Immediately following the incident, counseling was available to all staff and students who needed it. The next morning, district leaders met with parents and students to discuss what had happened and to allow them to express their feelings and concerns regarding the overall situation. District administrators provided parents and students with options concerning counseling and crisis intervention, especially for those students directly involved in the incident. Plans were discussed to have continued parental involvement in the development of a safer environment at the

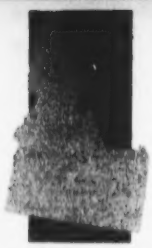
school. Parents also heard from law-enforcement representatives directly involved in the situation who discussed their view of the matter and the possible consequences for the perpetrator.

At the school where the incident occurred, the district worked to create a method for early identification of dangerous behaviors. To do this, disciplinary records were reviewed. Those students who had disciplinary files or who had demonstrated significant at-risk behavior in the past were identified as having the potential to create a high-risk situation. This information was shared with all staff since each of them had daily contact with all of the school's 30 students. This activity served to heighten staff awareness and possibly prevent any other dangerous situations from arising.

Administrators also committed to pursue ongoing education of staff. The entire staff was fully briefed on the hostage situation and was given pointers regarding the roles that law enforcement and the district staff would play in future incidents.

In looking at the school where the incident occurred, district administration determined that a complete overhaul was necessary in the educational and physical environment. A team of central office administrators was appointed to direct these changes. Several meetings were conducted with the alternative school staff, which resulted in the development of a complete plan to change the overall educational delivery system at the school. It was felt that the previous delivery system may have been punitive in nature and could have played a part in contributing to the volatile situation.

Using another district alternative school that had recently gone through a similar transformation as a model, the school received an entirely new staff dedicated to the specific needs of at-risk



youth, new curriculum geared toward different learning styles, and a new name. The district hopes that these changes will result in successes similar to those observed by the model school. Among many achievements, the model school boasts high attendance, quality student achievement, and positive student attitudes that are typically not found within high-risk student populations. It has also stimulated a dramatic reduction in the district dropout rate.

Observed Outcomes

- Staff, students, and parents have a greater sense of awareness of high-risk situations and how to deal with them
- Given the opportunity, at-risk students can be successful in a nurturing and understanding educational environment

Keys to Success

- Provide staff and students with as much counseling as needed following a violent incident
- Conduct open discussions about violence and solicit staff, student, and parent input regarding how to prevent volatile situations
- Don't be afraid to make drastic changes in a school or school system if it will make it a safer, more peaceful place for staff and students
- Partner with the entire school community (business representatives, community agencies, juvenile justice personnel) to ensure the success of your efforts

Location

Twin Falls School District
201 Main Avenue West
Twin Falls, ID 83301

Contact

Keith Farnsworth or Dale Thornsberry
Phone: 208/733-6900
Fax: 208/733-6987

Description

Acknowledging that no school or district can foresee and prepare for all crises and acts of violence that may occur, the Twin Falls School District has implemented a number of simple measures—some proactive, some responsive—that work to ensure the safety and security of all students and staff.

To begin with, the district's Safety Committee has encouraged all district school buildings to have a policy in place requiring anyone who is not a regular staff person or student to wear an identification badge. Badges are obtained at the front office when visitors first walk in. Students are instructed to report any stranger they see in the building not wearing a badge.

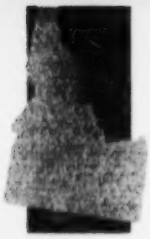
Another step the district took was to improve the communication systems between faculty and administration in all buildings. All classrooms had telephones installed, and each administrator was given a cell phone/walkie-talkie to carry at all times. This way, school staff are never incapacitated by their inability to talk and act during a crisis situation.

The third step the district took was to prepare a comprehensive crisis response manual, which is made available to all staff for review. The manual spells out exactly what is to be done in a variety of crisis situations. For example, the manual addresses what staff should do in the event of a hostage situation, school shooting, suicide, murder or death, gang activity, natural disaster, kidnapping, or bomb threat. The manual is updated regularly.

In addition, the district has set up a District Crisis Response Team charged with being ready and available to go to the site of any school experiencing crisis and provide assistance. The team, made up of nine district-office employees, has assigned roles for each of its members. These roles are: facilitator, security coordinator, internal communications, external communications, student-services liaison, staff-services liaison, parent liaison, recorder (stays with facilitator and takes notes), and crisis processor (monitors the proceedings of the event and reports back to facilitator on a regular basis).

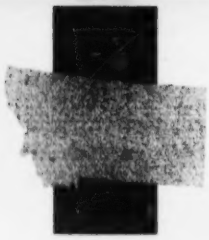
Observed Outcomes

- Staff feel better equipped to handle difficult, potentially violent situations
- The community has expressed its appreciation of the district's efforts to make schools safer
- School staff have found the crisis manual to be very useful in helping them think through possible scenarios and equipping them with procedures to follow should an incident occur
- The district's work has resulted in community partnerships with other agencies working toward the same goals (e.g., the police department)



Keys to Success

- Be proactive in thinking about violence prevention, and be prepared to respond appropriately and immediately should a crisis occur
- Educate teachers so that they feel confident and prepared to handle a variety of crisis situations
- Partner with your local police department—establish a sound working relationship with them
- Equip all schools with effective communication systems that prevent anyone in the building from feeling isolated
- Raise student and staff "people awareness" skills; implement procedures in school buildings that help students know who belongs in the building and who does not
- Set up a safety committee with a balanced representation of the school community; let it guide the district's safe schools work



Location

Butte Public Schools
111 North Montana
Butte, MT 59701

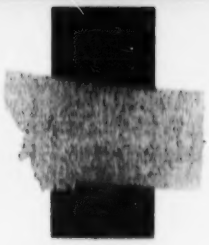
Contact

Kate Stetzner, Superintendent
Phone: 406/496-2100
Fax: 406/496-2020
Email: stetzner@montana.com

Description

Being home to a deadly school shooting is not a distinction any community wants, yet it is just such a label that has spurred the Butte Public School system to address the subject of youth violence head-on. In 1994, a troubled fourth-grade student walked into Butte's Margaret Leary Elementary School with a .22 semi-automatic rifle, intent on shooting a classmate he was angry with. The intended victim saw the assailant and ducked when the gun was aimed at him, but the child behind him didn't and was killed by a shot to the head.

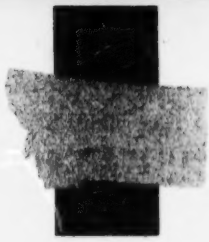
Noting that day as one of the darkest in her life, Superintendent Kate Stetzner (who was principal of Margaret Leary School at the time of the shooting) has since made it her mission to create safe learning environments for children and to assist in developing ways to identify potentially violent children early on in their school years. Stetzner, who now advises and speaks on school safety issues at the state and national level, has met personally with the President, Attorney General, and other members of the Executive Cabinet for discussions on the issue. She also teaches continuing education courses on school violence at the University



of Montana and Western Montana University. Clearly, from the darkest day of her life stemmed the driving commitment of her life.

Her heart, however, still belongs to the Montana town she calls home. Much has changed in Butte since the day of the shooting. People there now know violence isn't something that happens "someplace else." Following the shooting, each Butte school created a School Safety Team. The teams, comprised of a social worker, a probation officer, a DARE officer, the school janitor, the counselor, teachers, the principal, the truant officer, a parent, a clergyperson, a medical professional, and a mental health worker meet every two weeks. During the meetings they discuss logistics of maintaining a peaceful school, general school operation concerns, natural disaster preparedness, intervention strategies to red flag potentially violent children, security precautions, and appropriate family interventions for students from troubled homes. The purpose of the teams is to give schools the ability to reach out to troubled kids quickly an effectively. The members of the teams also work to train school personnel, parents, and others in the school community to identify the early warning signs of violent offenders, to intervene appropriately, and to develop prevention and response plans tailored to each school's particular needs.

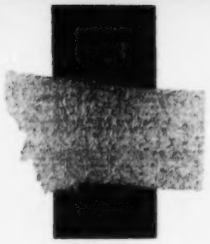
Another measure the district took to ensure that students felt safe at school was to hire School Resource Officers to be present in the schools throughout the day. The Resource Officers were hired by the police department and placed in the schools to address and enforce the law. These officers have all the legal power of regular police officers and can arrest and follow through with juvenile offenses committed on the school grounds and off.



Other efforts the district actively implements include a conflict resolution/peer mediation program, disaster response training, and a formal violence prevention curriculum. The conflict resolution/peer mediation program is coordinated by parent volunteers who received training from Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory professionals. Second Step (see page 53 for a description of the Second Step program), the violence prevention curriculum implemented in the district, is delivered via school counselors. The school janitor is responsible for conducting disaster response training. The janitor guides all students through earthquake, fire, and crisis response training.

In addition to these efforts, Stetzner created a districtwide review team that examines student offenders who have been caught with a firearm at a school and makes recommendations for enforcing the district's 365-day expulsion rule and alternative educational planning to the superintendent, who then makes recommendations to the district board of trustees. Families may request a review team hearing during the expulsion, similar to a parole board hearing, on a case-by-case basis.

The community, too, continually shows its support for the violence prevention work being done in Butte. Annually, 3,000 families participate in Butte's Walk Against Violence. Attended by such dignitaries as the Montana state Attorney General, the walk raises money for the upkeep and maintenance of the district's 40-acre outdoor sports complex, built with the intent of offering kids safe activity alternatives during out-of-school hours. The community is also involved in a state grant that seeks to provide students with service skills. This effort pairs local service clubs with a specific grade level of students, and together they are assigned an outdoor area of school grounds (including the outdoor complex and the district's nature park) to maintain and beautify.

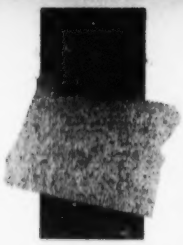


Observed Outcomes

- The community is now very involved with the schools and understands the importance of teaming with educators and working together to create peaceful schools
- A feeling of security has returned in the schools
- Thanks to the a School Safety Teams, school staff now feel more secure and confident in their ability to respond effectively in crisis situations

Keys to Success

- Implement a proactive schoolwide crisis response plan that involves collaboration between the school, parents, community agencies, and the business community (the school counselor is usually a good person to serve as liaison between the school and other agencies)
- Work to be as informed as possible about students' lives outside of school; if problem home situations are identified, involve the necessary agencies and individuals to intervene
- Teach students conflict-resolution skills
- Train teachers how to identify potentially at-risk or harmful students and have in place a policy that effectively addresses those identified
- Work to attain high levels of parent involvement and parent accountability
- Include all school staff, including support and custodial staff, in implementing violence prevention efforts



Location

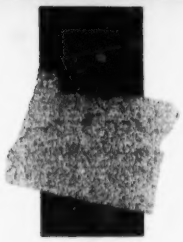
Lane Education Service District
1200 Highway 99N
Eugene, OR 97402-0374

Contact

Kathy White, Prevention Specialist
Phone: 541/461-8267
Fax: 541/461-8297

Description

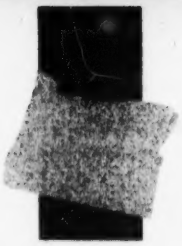
The Peaceable Educational Practices Project is a collaborative effort of the University of Oregon's Institute on Violence and Destructive Behavior, the Lane Education Service District (ESD), the Eugene School District, Roseburg Public Schools, South Lane School District, and Douglas County ESD, all school systems located in western Oregon. Specifically, the Peaceable Educational Practices Project works with 10 pilot site schools, serving students in elementary through middle grades. The goal of the project is to develop and maintain safe learning environments where teachers can teach and students can learn. The specialists at Lane ESD who coordinate and deliver the technical assistance describe the program as having three main components or intervention points. These are described as follows:



1. **Data Systems.** Before any violence prevention work can be implemented, schools must first assess their strengths and weaknesses. Program coordinators assist school teams to create a school profile that highlights different aspects of the school's overall safety and discipline system. For example, they may examine the number of discipline referrals in a given time frame and what the context of those referrals was (e.g., playground altercations, lunch room incidents, or classroom disturbances). Several specific instruments are used to develop the profile. Utilizing a variety of data collection and analysis methods, the instruments help schools to examine things like staff and student perceptions, crisis response plans, and student behavior patterns.

2. **Effective Behavior Support System (EBS).** Based on the information obtained from the school profile, a team of teachers (known as the EBS team) work with program coordinators to determine what direction the school needs to take in making education a more peaceful and safe experience for its students. It is their responsibility to guide and direct the school as it addresses specific problem areas. Once the EBS team has made its recommendations for improvement, the school's plan of action is tailored to meet the identified needs.

3. **Curriculum Implementation.** Schools need to choose a curriculum for comprehensive implementation. Many participating schools choose to implement the Second Step curriculum, which teaches kids conflict resolution skills, empathy, impulse control, anger management, and nonviolent problem-solving approaches. Second Step involves extensive training for both teachers and students. (See page 53).

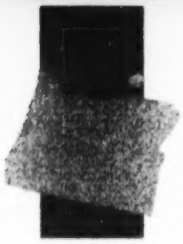


Observed Outcomes

- Participating schools are experiencing a dramatic decrease in office referral patterns
- The systems approach that is utilized in the project moves schools away from punitive and reactive student management models to those that are instructional and preventative in design
- Schools are given the tools to make informed, data-based decisions about their goals and long-term efforts

Keys to Success

- Implement a program that is proactive and addresses the entire school system (schoolwide discipline, classroom management, nonclassroom school settings, and individual student behavior)
- Base program implementation on the specific needs of specific schools—tailor changes to site needs
- Involve staff from the ground up in analyzing their school and proposing system changes
- Teach and reward appropriate student behavior



Location

Whiteaker Middle School
1605 Lockhaven Drive NE
Keizer, OR 97303-2099

Contact

Irene Fernandez, Principal
Phone: 503/399-3224
Fax: 503/375-7872

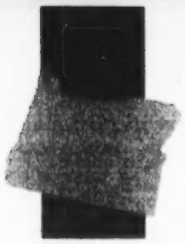
Description

Somewhere between raging hormones and jockeying for a position in the social hierarchy lies the pursuit of a quality education for middle school students. This can often be difficult to achieve, however, with the disturbances and altercations that frequently pepper the school day. Understanding this and many of the other fears and uncertainties about life that middle school children bring with them, the staff at Whiteaker Middle School set out to change the climate of their school four years ago. They had witnessed an overall increase in the number of students in the building, and determined they needed to work extra hard to provide all students with a sense of belonging and community. These days, the Mom Squad, structured noon and after-school activities and sports, peer counseling, peer mediators, school-within-a-school, service-learning opportunities, and a specialized teacher team are all efforts that contribute to the peaceful environment at Whiteaker.

When sixth-grade students joined Whiteaker's student body fours years ago, so did the Mom Squad. With only three administrators in charge of 1,250 students, the school recognized that having more adults present at lunch time could drastically raise

the level of peace. In response to this need, the Mom Squad was born. The Mom Squad is a group of volunteer parents (some dads have participated, but the effort involves mainly moms) who commit to spending time walking the halls of the school on a regular basis. As many as 25-30 parents may participate on the squad during any given year. Generally, they spend a couple of hours each school day at the school. Initially, the Mom Squad was received with defiance from many students, who didn't want their days cramped by more adults. Today, however, the squad is an accepted (and welcomed) part of the school. They make themselves available to answer student questions, provide directions, prevent fights, and help at different times in the school day. The Mom Squad has been so successful in fact, that they are now present at McNary High School.

In addition to the Mom Squad, specific lunch and after-school activities were developed as another way of enhancing the tone of the school day. By providing structure to portions of the day not spent in class, the staff felt it would be more able to combat the discipline problems that often occur during these times. During lunch students can elect to be involved in one of three activity areas. They can go to a designated classroom and play video, mind, or board games; they can visit the library/media center; or they can participate in sports activities in the gym. Weather permitting, they can also spend time outside. Daily, students participate in these lunch options. After school, students can be a part of groups that focus on a variety of activities, including science, arts, shop, knitting, crocheting, football, cross country, volleyball, and other seasonal sports. On average, 250-300 students take advantage of Whiteaker's after-school activities each day. In addition, all Whiteaker students are involved in service-learning activities that they identify and organize.



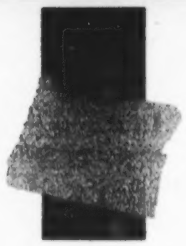
Whiteaker also has access to a Prevention/Intervention Resource Teacher (PIRT). The PIRT, who divides his time among several district schools, is paid through general school funds and state Safe and Drug-Free Schools monies. He was instrumental in setting up Whiteaker's peer counseling program, which identifies and trains students to listen effectively and assist other students in making good choices. The peer counselors also work as mediators and negotiate difficult situations between other students. Another duty of the PIRT is to provide counseling to at-risk students. The Student Study Team (SST), a group comprised of Whiteaker teachers, counselors, special education teachers, an administrator, and the PIRT, meet regularly to discuss students who have been identified by other school staff as being troubled in some way. The team works with the PIRT to evaluate student problems and determine what should be done to meet specific needs.

Observed Outcomes

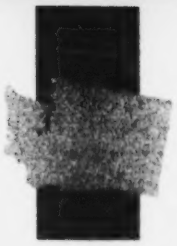
- Parental and community involvement at the school has increased
- Student behavior has improved, which has enhanced the overall school climate
- Communication between staff, parents, and the community is better

Keys to Success

- Keep communication between the school and parents open and positive
- Involve teachers in planning and discussion of proposed ideas and changes



- Create a teacher focus team made up of your building's teacher leaders; use this team as a sounding board for new ideas and as support for practice implementation



SECOND STEP

LOCATION

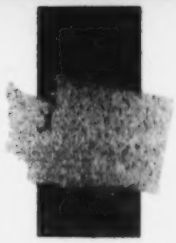
Committee For Children
2203 Airport Way South, Suite 500
Seattle, WA 98134-2027

CONTACT

Client Support Services
Phone: 1-800-634-4449
Fax: 206/343-1445

DESCRIPTION

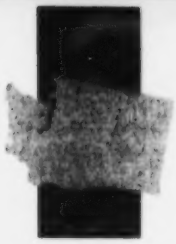
Second Step is a school-based social skills/violence prevention curriculum for preschool through junior high students that teaches children to change attitudes and behaviors that contribute to violence. Created by Committee for Children, a national not-for-profit agency, the curriculum teaches skills to reduce impulsive and aggressive behavior in children and increase their level of social competence. Research has shown people prone to violent and aggressive behavior lack a common set of social skills (empathy, impulse control, problem solving, and anger management). In addition, studies have also indicated that the reasons children do not use prosocial behavior include lack of modeling, lack of opportunities to practice behaviors, and inadequate reinforcement. Second Step addresses this research by teaching, modeling, practicing, and reinforcing skills in empathy, impulse control, and anger management at all grade levels. The content of the lessons vary according to grade level, and the skills targeted for practice are designed to be developmentally appropriate.



Schools or school systems that choose to implement the Second Step program are required to be trained in Second Step methodology. The Committee for Children holds regular regional Second Step trainings throughout the country and in Canada. Schools can also elect to pay Second Step experts to come to them and provide training. Trainings can be structured in a "train-the-trainer" model, which equips educators to go back to their schools to serve as Second Step trainers, or they can be geared as general staff training, which gives teachers the skills to effectively use the Second Step curriculum in their classrooms. Those who attend the training for trainers receive a full set of materials and staff-training videos to help them conduct their own staff trainings.

The Second Step curricula for preschool and elementary students consist of three kits: Preschool/Kindergarten, Grades 1-3, and Grades 4-5. In these kits, the main lesson format is the use of an 11" by 17" photo lesson card. The teacher shows the photograph to the class and follows the lesson outline on the reverse of the card. The lesson techniques include discussion, teacher modeling of the skills, and role plays. The lessons in the middle school/junior high curriculum are divided into three levels: Level 1: foundation lessons, and Levels 2 and 3: skill building lessons. Each level includes discussion lessons, overhead transparencies, reproducible homework sheets, and a live-action video. The three levels of lessons allow students to receive comprehensive, multi-year training in prosocial skills. At each grade level (preschool through grade nine), the lessons build sequentially, and should be taught in the order intended. The lessons vary in length from 20 minutes at the preschool level to 50 minutes in middle school/junior high. There are approximately 20 lessons for each grade level.

Families can also be involved in the Second Step program. *A Family Guide to Second Step: Parenting Strategies for a Safer Tomorrow* is a video-based parent program designed to help parents and



caregivers of Second Step students in preschool through grade five apply prosocial skills to parenting situations. The family component works to familiarize parents with the Second Step curriculum, assist them with reinforcing the skills at home, and give them the skills to communicate feelings, solve problems, control anger, and deal with conflict. The family component of the program requires a group facilitator (trained in Second Step instruction) to conduct meetings. Everything a group facilitator needs to conduct the six group meetings is contained in the Second Step *Family Guide*, which includes a 30-minute overview tape, three skill-training videos, a scripted facilitator's guide, masters of family handouts, and refrigerator magnets depicting the problem-solving and anger-management steps.

Second Step was first pilot-tested in 1985, and has since received acclaim for its success in developing positive social behavior in children. In 1997, the results of a study conducted on the Second Step program by the Centers for Disease Control found that students who were taught the curriculum became less physically and verbally aggressive after participation in the program. In addition, these students were found to have increased their positive social interactions, while the behavior of students not receiving Second Step instruction worsened, becoming more physically and verbally aggressive over the school year with no measured increase in neutral or prosocial behavior. The program was also positively reviewed in a recent publication by Drug Strategies called *Safe Schools, Safe Students: A Guide to Violence Prevention Strategies*. Today there are over 10,000 schools using Second Step around the United States and Canada.

For more information about Second Step, including costs and scheduled training events, please contact the Committee For Children at 1-800-634-4449, or visit their Website at http://www.cfchildren.org.

APPENDIX I

PURCHASING A VIOLENCE PREVENTION PROGRAM

Many schools choose to purchase programs that can come with everything from lesson plans to videos to on-site training. When sorting through all the options available, it is important to note that effective school-based violence prevention programs share key elements. Questions to consider in selecting a program that is right for your school include the following criteria, adopted from Drug Strategies and the Comprehensive Health Education Foundation:

1. Is the program based on theory and research?
2. Does the program include a comprehensive K-12 curriculum? Are interventions developmentally tailored to be age and stage specific?
3. Does the program include practical, skill-building lessons and activities in addition to information?
4. Is the program comprehensive, involving family, peers, media, and the entire community?
5. Does the program use culturally sensitive material appropriate for working with students from a wide variety of cultural and ethnic backgrounds?
6. Do teachers find the program satisfying and valuable? Does it include teacher training?
7. Is the program cost-efficient?
8. Can the program be incorporated into a school's total curriculum?
9. Do students enjoy the program?

APPENDIX 2

TEN THINGS KIDS CAN DO TO STOP VIOLENCE

1. Settle arguments with words, not fists or weapons. Don't stand around and form an audience when others are arguing. A group makes a good target for violence.
2. Learn safe routes for walking in the neighborhood, and know good places to seek help.
3. Report any crimes or suspicious actions to the police, school authorities, and parents.
4. Don't open the door to anyone you don't know and trust.
5. Never go anywhere with someone you don't know and trust.
6. If someone tries to abuse you, say no, get away, and tell a trusted adult. Trust feelings, and if you sense danger, get away fast. Remember: Violence is not the victim's fault.
7. Don't use alcohol or other drugs, and stay away from places and people associated with them.
8. Stick with friends who are also against violence and drugs, and stay away from known trouble spots.
9. Get involved to make school safer and better. Hold rallies, counsel peers, settle disputes peacefully. If there's no program, help start one.
10. Help younger children learn to avoid being crime victims. Set a good example, and volunteer to help with community efforts to stop crime and prevent violence.

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